LOOKIN
AT THE

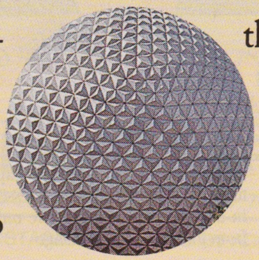
Epcot, the forward-thinking theme park at Walt Disney World, turns

By TIM O'DAY

With an INTRODUCTION *by* RAY BRADBURY

IN 1933, when I was 13 years old, my parents took me to Chicago to walk through the incredible buildings of the Century of Progress. I was so stunned by the experience that I refused to go home that night; I had to be dragged from the fairgrounds to get on the train to go north to Waukegan.

A year later I heard the terrible news that the builders of that future environment were planning to tear it all down.



It was then that I began to write stories about imaginary cities and to draw architectural blueprints of stores and theaters to ensure that as fast as those fools destroyed the future, I would re-create it, always dreaming that someday I would have a chance to build such a future.

Imagine my delight 22 years ago when the Disney people asked me to help create Spaceship Earth at Epcot. How wonderful to imagine a future that would be permanent!

G BACK
FUTURE

20 on October 1. Here's a look at some of its memorable milestones.

In the 1960s, science fiction author Ray Bradbury helped Walt Disney refine his ideas for the original Epcot: a futuristic city.

The original plan for Epcot envisioned a community for people to live in. How much more exciting was the evolution of an environment of metaphors — visions of the future — that could inspire people to create, as well as to live in, finer cities and then to fly off and land on the moon and Mars.

The challenge of Epcot — to birth the impossible and to free the spirit — has been met in multifold ways. To enter it is to be bombarded with metaphors that make you feel you could meet and solve the world's problems.

Epcot keeps changing and growing, and the final sum is that it contains the absolute assurance that our fine Tomorrows will not be left behind in our lost Yesterdays.

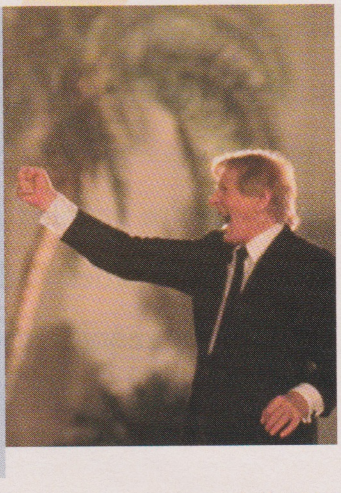
THE FUTURE BEGINS

"The twenty-first century begins October 1, 1982." Thus proclaimed the EPCOT (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) Center preview brochure, which was given to Walt Disney World and Disneyland guests, travel agents, and cast members. Throughout the monthlong celebration, each of the 15 Future World and World Showcase pavilions featured its own ribbon-cutting and dedication ceremony. These festivities led up to a party-filled grand-opening weekend October 22 to 24, with a guest list that included Lillian Disney, Florida Governor Bob Graham, authors Alex Haley and Ray Bradbury, even New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner.

A highlight of the main dedication ceremony was the International Ceremony of the Waters. In a symbolic gesture of global cooperation, representatives of 23 countries poured water from their homelands into the Communicore Plaza fountain. Water came from as far away as the Arctic Ocean, the Nile River in Africa, and the Yangtze River in China.

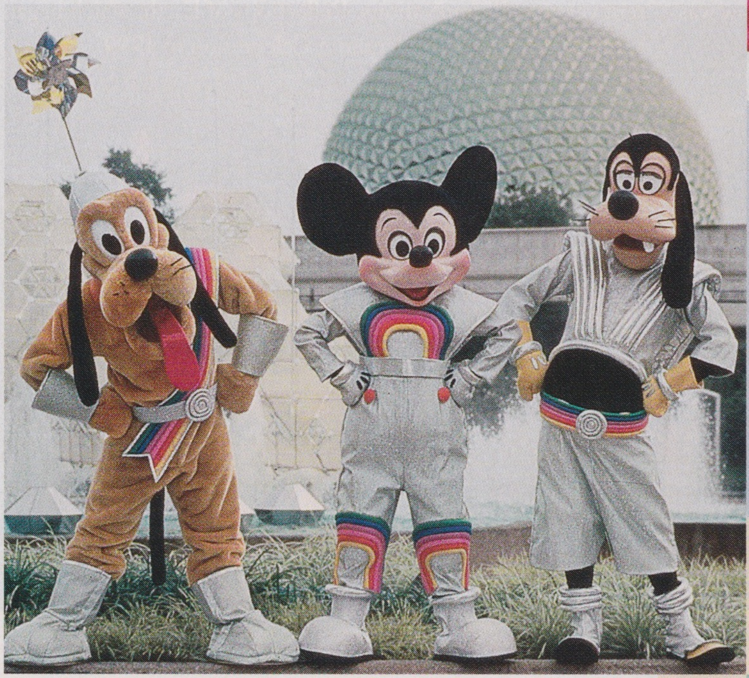
THE REVOLUTIONARY NEW PARK WILL BE TELEVISED

On October 23, 1982, TV viewers across the country finally got a look at the new addition to Walt Disney World in the special, *EPCOT Center: The Opening Celebration*. The presentation starred Marie Osmond *(left)*, musician Roy Clark, a seven-year-old Drew Barrymore, and journalist Eric Severeid, and was hosted by Danny Kaye *(right)*.



MAKING HEADLINES

The month of opening ceremonies was covered by media from around the world. Satellite uplink broadcast technology was widely available for the first time, permitting live coverage by more than 100 television crews. The morning news show *Today,* with Jane Pauley and Bryant Gumbel *(right)*, broadcast live from Epcot during the park's opening week.



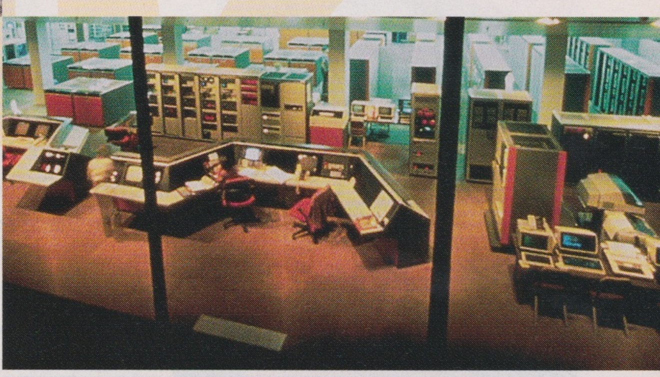
SPACE CADETS

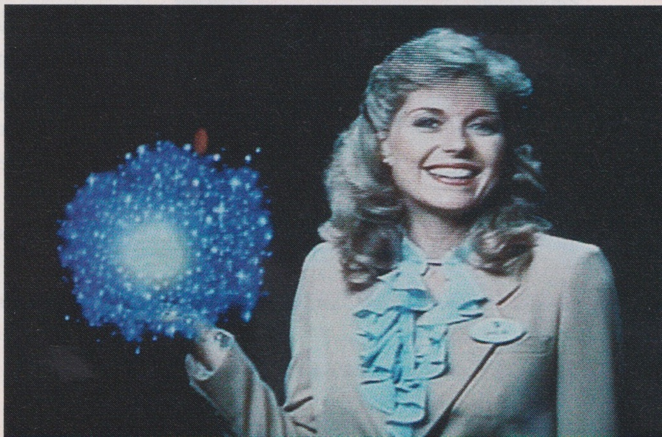
In the 1980s no one was immune to bad fashion — not even Pluto, Mickey, and Goofy *(left)*. These "futuristic" outfits were worn by the famous trio during outings in Future World. The bright stripes and silver lamé reminded cast members of a certain toy popular in the early 1980s, and they often referred to Mickey's ultramodern duds as his "Rainbow Brite" outfit.

BYTE-SIZE

The Astuter Computer Revue *(right, top)* holds the distinction of having the shortest life span of any of the original Epcot attractions, disappearing from Communicore in Future World after two years. In the show a two-foot-tall Englishman explained the inner workings of a state-of-the-art (circa 1982) computer through music, dance, and animation. The show used many of the computers that actually operated such Epcot systems as the air-conditioning and lighting.

Unfortunately, the attraction was in a hopeless race against progress. Computer technology developed so quickly that the show was outdated almost before it opened. The Revue was replaced by Backstage Magic *(right, bottom)* in February 1984, and though the new show also suffered from ever-faster technological advances, it kept audiences entertained until it closed on October 1, 1993.





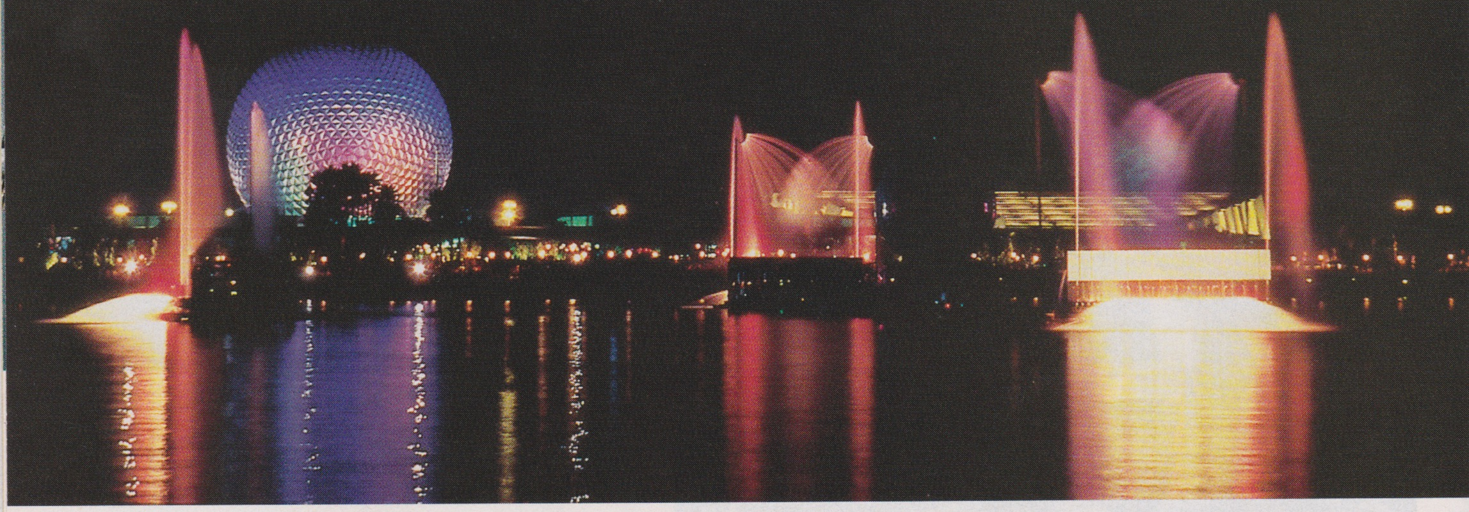
ILLUMINATING

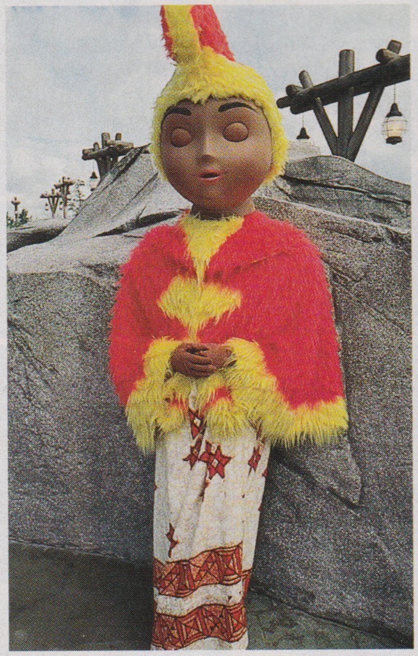
The success of IllumiNations, the park's water, light, music, and fireworks extravaganza currently playing on the 40-acre World Showcase Lagoon, is the result of lessons learned from three previous shows.

The first nighttime World Showcase Lagoon production was Le Carnival de Lumière *(pictured)*, which debuted on October 23, 1982. The presentation used rear-projection screens on floating barges, but as remarkable as the show was, it had one serious drawback: "You could really see the whole show from only two points between the Canada and Mexico pavilions," says Alice Davis, retired Disney Imagineer. "But what you saw was very good."

When A New World Fantasy premiered in the summer of 1983, guests could watch it from every vantage point around World Showcase. That show also introduced the use of automated Pichel lights, programmable spotlights that make swift, precise movements. A year later Laserphonic Fantasy debuted with a synthesized soundtrack by Don Dorsey, who also had created music for the Main Street Electrical Parade.

IllumiNations was unveiled on January 30, 1988. It still attracts thousands of viewers each night, and has proven so popular that it has inspired various updates, including Holiday IllumiNations (1994), IllumiNations 25 (1996), and the current version, IllumiNations: Reflections of Earth, which began running during the Millennium Celebration in 1999.



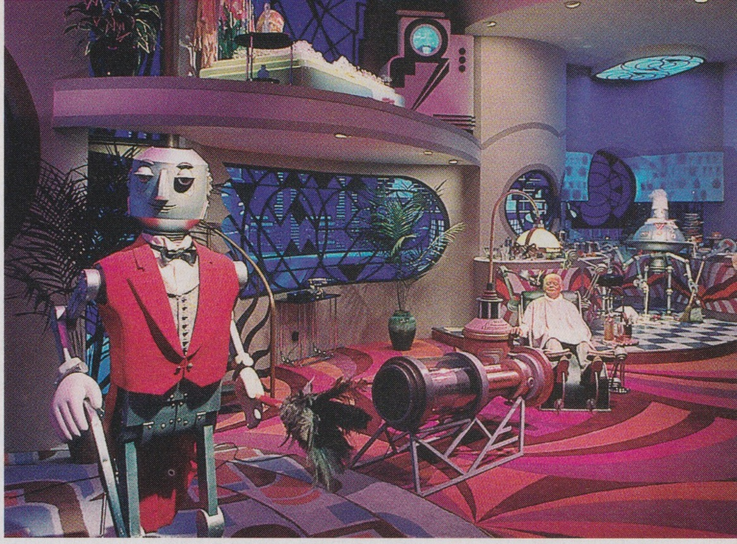


WHAT A DOLL

In the early 1980s many Epcot guests encountered the larger-than-life People of the World "dolls" *(left)* in World Showcase. Many of these curious characters were actually experiencing the second phase of their Disney careers. Some of the dolls were created for America on Parade, a bicentennial celebration at Disneyland and Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom from June 1975 through September 1976. With the opening of Epcot, the dolls were brought out of retirement, and new ones were made to match them. They stood seven to eight feet high and were dressed in authentic costumes ranging from American cowboy hats to Japanese kimonos.

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

Journey Into Imagination opened in 1982 with the Magic Eye Theater featuring the 3-D film *Magic Journeys*, the interactive area Image Works, and the "jumping" Picture Garden Fountains. On March 5, 1983, the actual Journey Into Imagination attraction opened, introducing the eccentric Dreamfinder and his irrepressible dragon sidekick, Figment (seen at right in the early 1980s with Dreamfinder, former president Richard M. Nixon, and Nixon's grandson Alex Eisenhower). With these two characters and a catchy theme song ("One Little Spark" by the Sherman Brothers), Journey Into Imagination became a hit, and Figment became the unofficial mascot of the park.



REMEMBERING THE SMELLITZER

The Horizons pavilion welcomed its first guest on October 1, 1983, exactly one year after Epcot opened. The three-acre building was wholly devoted to the future. Its early working name was Century 3, a nod to the United States just having entered its third century.

Horizons *(right)* showed visitors what future life might be like on land, under the sea, and in space. Using a menu on their vehicle, they could select an ending for their journey: flying in a desert hovercraft, traveling undersea in a personal submarine, or racing through space on a mini shuttle.

In the Mesa Verde desert scene, the Smellitzer let guests savor the aromas of orange groves. A large-screen-format film was projected on what was then the world's largest motion-picture screen, 80 feet high and 240 feet wide. The attraction was also full of inside jokes: The character of Tom II in the space colony scene was modeled after Imagineering show writer Tom Fitzgerald, and keen ears could hear the familiar strains of "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow" from the Carousel of Progress coming from the television in a 1940s scene.

Horizons closed on January 9, 1999, to make room for Mission: Space, set to open in 2003.

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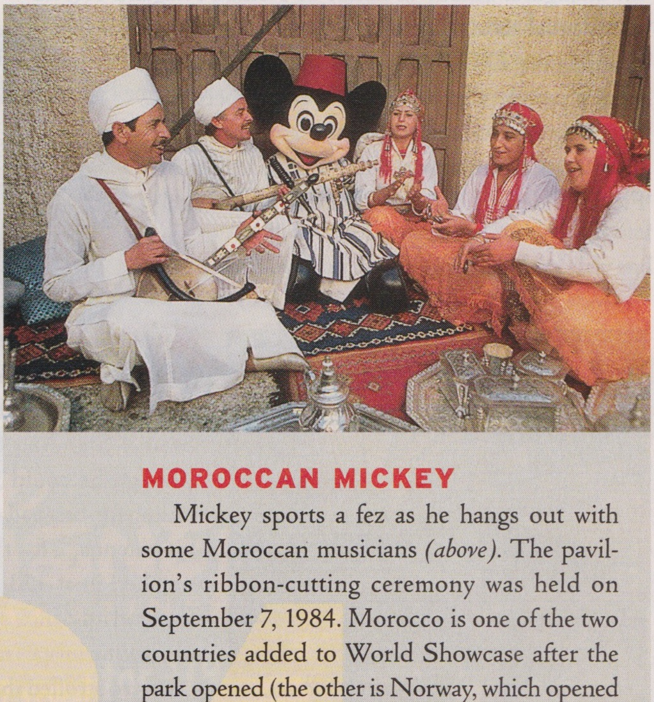
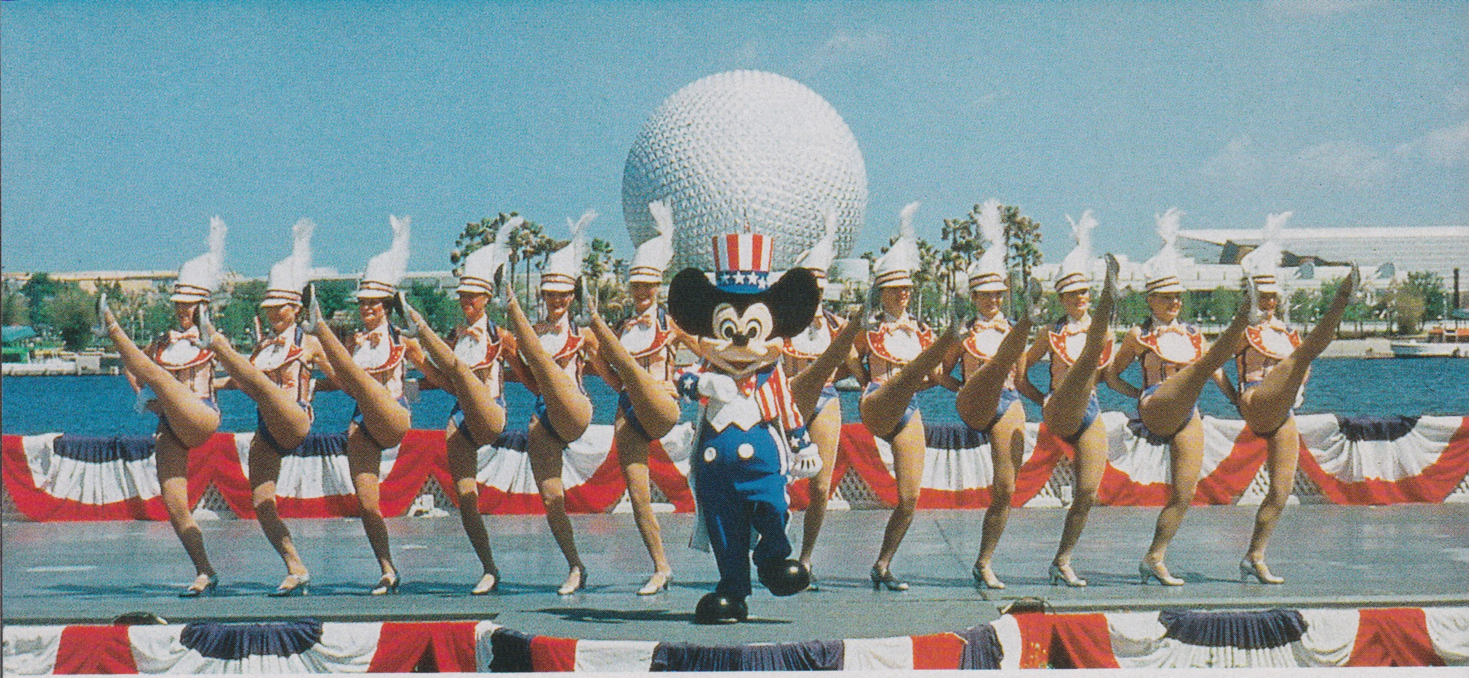


MOROCCAN MICKEY

Mickey sports a fez as he hangs out with some Moroccan musicians *(above)*. The pavilion's ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on September 7, 1984. Morocco is one of the two countries added to World Showcase after the park opened (the other is Norway, which opened May 6, 1988).

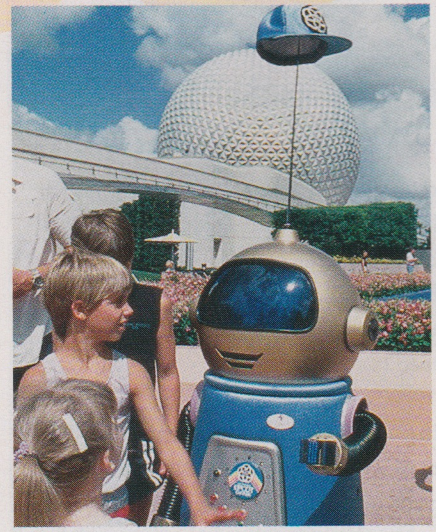
During the pavilion's construction, the Kingdom of Morocco sent craftsmen to Epcot to create all the tile work, carvings, and paintings. A prayer tower, a detailed replica of the Katoubia Minaret in Marrakech, stands at the entrance.



FOR KICKS

The year 1985 presented Mickey with a pair of opportunities to dress in Uncle Sam garb. The first was a historic occasion: the Inaugural Parade in honor of Ronald Reagan's second presidential term. Due to record-low temperatures in Washington, D.C., on January 21, 1985, the President's parade was postponed. The procession, full of high school and collegiate marching bands, resurfaced at Epcot on May 27, under sunny Florida skies. Mickey and Minnie Mouse welcomed President and Mrs. Reagan *(inset)*, and following a speech by the President, he and the First Lady took their places in front of The American Adventure pavilion, along with their hosts Disney Company chairman Michael Eisner and his wife Jane.

A few weeks later, Mickey joined the Radio City Rockettes on the America Gardens stage for a Star Spangled Summer Salute to America *(above)*. The salute ran from June 8 to September 1 as part of WorldFest, a yearlong celebration of the nations in Epcot's World Showcase.



PRATTLEBOT

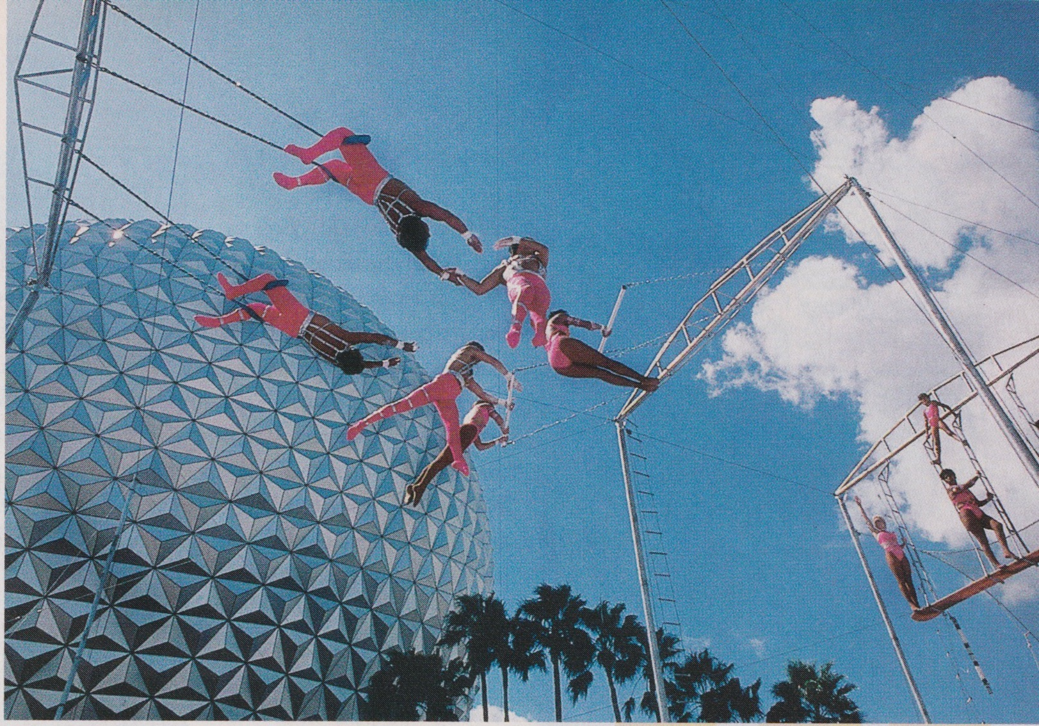
In 1985 an unusual personality took up residence in Future World. His name was Gyro and he was the latest in robotics. Very little is known of Gyro except that he lived on a diet of diodes and microchips and attended the tech school "Solid State." Standing four feet 10 inches (though he could reach seven feet by raising the baseball cap on his head with his antenna, left), the diminutive robot weighed in at 150 pounds. His "face" featured a 12-inch screen that displayed fiber-optic images to convey his moods.

Gyro strolled through the crowds of Future World and interacted with guests. He could talk, tell jokes, sing, and read the time on a guest's Mickey Mouse watch. Gyro had a funny bone in the shape of a red button on his front and would giggle when guests "tickled" him. When asked by astounded guests how he worked, Gyro would simply reply, "On twelve frequencies!"

FLIPPED OUT

Epcot has hosted its share of airborne spectacles in the past two decades, including Skyleidoscope and Surprise in the Skies.

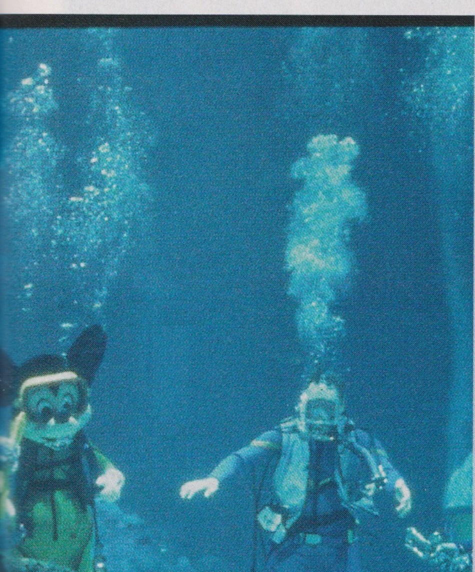
In 1987 one of the most unusual events ever presented at Epcot was staged in the park's main entrance plaza. It was called EPCOT Intergalactic Daredevil Circus Spectacular and starred bravehearted aerialists and trapeze artists who performed 100 feet above the ground. Staged four times a day, the show featured the Rodriguezes, a fifth-generation circus family performing heart-stopping high-wire acts *(right)*, and two death-defying "space cyclists" who raced toward each other on a suspended wire.



JACKSON TAKES FIVE

On September 12, 1986, the Magic Eye Theater in the Journey Into Imagination pavilion premiered Captain Eo, with its 3-D film directed by Francis Ford Coppola; George Lucas served as executive producer. The 17-minute film featured a cast led by Michael Jackson and starred Angelica Huston and Dick Shawn. Jackson wrote the film's two signature songs: "We Are Here to Change the World" and "Another Part of Me."

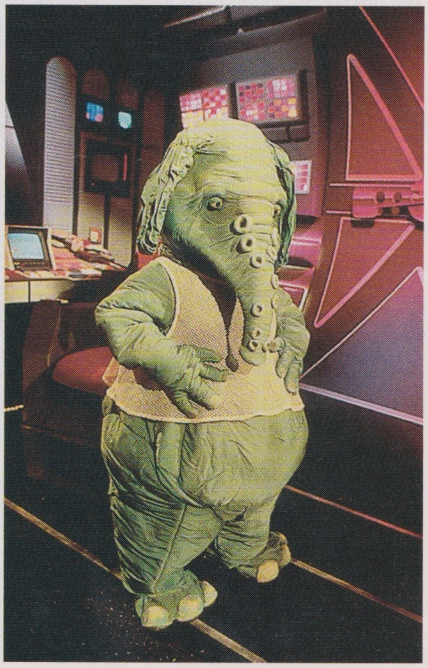
The theater was equipped with special effects such as lasers, fiber optics, and fog, all synchronized to the action on the screen. The original $11 million budget grew to $17 million as more and more effects were added. Hooter *(below)* and the two-headed Geex (Idy and Ody) were the alien stars of the show.



BUBBLERS

When The Living Seas pavilion opened on January 15, 1986, in Future World, it became home to one of the world's largest saltwater tanks and more than 4,000 species of sea life, including sharks, rays, dolphins, and the Florida manatee. During the ceremony, Disney Company chairman Michael Eisner watched scuba-diving Disney president Frank Wells and Mickey cut the opening-day ribbon inside the 5.7-million-gallon aquarium *(left)*.

The opening of the pavilion was followed up with *Disney's Living Seas*, a one-hour national television special that aired on January 24, 1986, and starred John Ritter, Laura Branigan, Simon Le Bon, and Olivia Newton-John.



CRANIUM COMMAND

INSIDE STORY

One of the highlights of the Wonders of Life pavilion, which opened October 19, 1989, is Cranium Command *(left)*, an amusing look inside the mind of a 12-year-old boy named Bobby. To learn about the motto, "Use your head, don't lose your head," guests join Buzzy, a rookie in the Cranium Command with a mission: to successfully navigate Bobby through the stress of everyday preteen life.

Cranium Command is one of Epcot's most star-studded attractions, with a cast that includes Charles Grodin (the left brain), Jon Lovitz (the right brain), George Wendt (the stomach), and Bobcat Goldthwait (the adrenal glands). Kevin Nealon and Dana Carvey — as bodybuilders Hans and Franz from *Saturday Night Live* — portray the heart.

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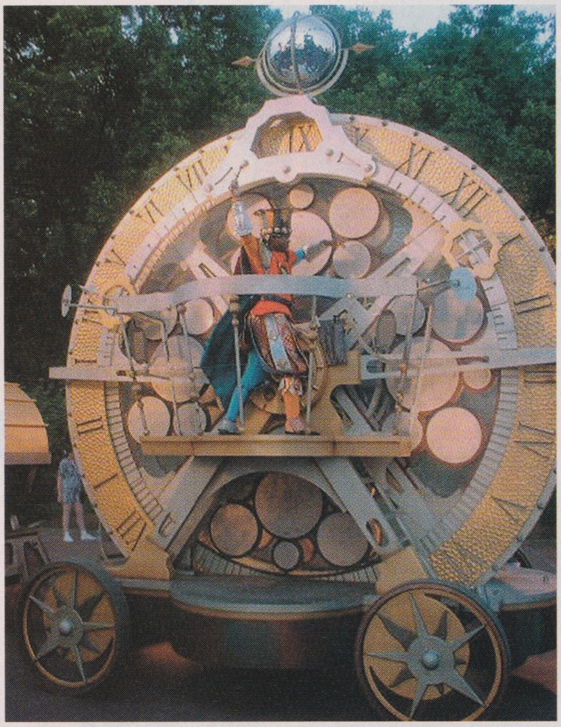
TRACK STARS

On January 2, 1996, the wheels of change rolled into Future World when the World of Motion, one of Epcot's original attractions, closed its doors for good. After four years of extensive design, construction, and reconstruction, the World of Motion was officially reborn on March 17, 1999, as Test Track, a demonstration of rigorous automotive testing — and the park's first high-speed thrill ride. Race car driver Richard Petty *(right)* and models *(clockwise from top right)* Angie Everhart, Carol Alt, and Christie Brinkley took a spin on opening day.

Test Track is one of the most complex attractions at Epcot. Each of its 31 vehicles contains three computers, which have more processing power than the computers aboard the space shuttle. With a course that is more than one mile in length, Test Track is one of the longest Disney attractions in the world and the fastest at Walt Disney World: Its vehicles accelerate up to 65 miles per hour during the elevated lap around the outside of the building.



ANNE S. THAMES

MAKE MINE MILLENNIUM

One of the highlights of the 15-month-long Millennium Celebration at Epcot was the Tapestry of Nations parade. Premiering on October 1, 1999, the parade made nightly processions around World Showcase Lagoon until September 9, 2001. (It was redesigned a bit and became the current Tapestry of Dreams on October 1, 2001.) Representing the beginning of the new century, the Sage of Time led the parade, followed by 120 puppets (ranging in height from 12 to 18 feet) and 15 Millennium Clock drum floats *(left)*. Michael Curry, who worked on the creations for *The Lion King* on Broadway, designed the puppets.

A huge new pavilion, Millennium Village *(below)*, was created for the celebration. The spotlight was on the music, dance, architecture, and art of countries not represented before in Epcot — including Brazil, Chile, Denmark, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Sweden. Inside, guests could take part in a Scottish golfing demonstration, watch dancers from Puerto Rico, or sip Chilean wine.

FUTURE WORLDS

In 2003 Epcot will enter its third decade with Mission: Space. This thrill ride of the future, set more than 30 years from now, will be the most technologically advanced attraction at Walt Disney World. Built by Walt Disney Imagineering in consultation with former NASA advisers, astronauts, and scientists, the attraction will introduce a unique ride system. Guests will embark on a realistic deep-space journey that seeks to replicate the sensations of liftoff, leaving the gravitational pull of Earth, and soaring millions of miles through the solar system. DM